



## *AOT in Action*

### **TOURISM WORKS FOR ARIZONA!**

Welcome to AOT in Action, your weekly e-newsletter from the Arizona Office of Tourism (AOT).

#### **A Message from the Director:**

Good morning.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the U.S. Department of State (DOS) announced last week the final rule for the land and sea portion of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI). The WHTI, a core 9/11 Commission recommendation, requires all travelers to present a passport or other approved secure document denoting citizenship and identity for all land and sea travel in the U.S. The first phase of the WHTI was implemented for air travel only in January 2007.

The WHTI final rule for the land and sea portion requires all travelers to present a passport or other WHTI-compliant approved secure document denoting citizenship and identity for all land and sea travel into the U.S. WHTI establishes document requirements for all travelers entering the U.S. who were previously exempt, including citizens of the U.S., Canada and Bermuda. This requirement includes U.S. travelers who want to take a trip to Mexico. U.S. travelers touring Mexico will be required to have a passport or WHTI-compliant document to return to the U.S.

These requirements will be effective **June 1, 2009**. DHS is publishing the WHTI land and sea final rule more than a year in advance of its implementation to give the public ample notice and time to obtain the WHTI-compliant documents they will need to enter or re-enter the U.S. on or after the June 1<sup>st</sup> deadline.

With the support of Governor Janet Napolitano, a great proponent of the tourism industry, AOT has been working in partnership with the travel and tourism industry on a national level with groups such as the Travel Industry Association (TIA), the Western States Tourism Policy Council (WSTPC) and the Border Trade Alliance (BTA) to support an appropriate implementation of WHTI since September 2005 when Customs and Border Protection (CBP) announced the proposed rule. Governor Napolitano has consistently supported the U.S. government's need to increase security at ports of entry and has advocated for the technology to do so, while promoting the facilitation of travel and trade to and from the United States.


AOT and the travel industry have also lobbied for more cost-effective alternatives to a passport that satisfy the WHTI requirements. These alternatives include the Passport Card for land and sea crossing, which is now available, and the Arizona Enhanced Driver's License which is expected to be available by the end of the year.

For more information on the Passport Card, please visit [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov) for details.

For a full list of WHTI-compliant documents, please visit [www.dhs.gov](http://www.dhs.gov) or [www.cbp.gov](http://www.cbp.gov).

For the most current information, please visit the Department of State's Web site, [www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov) or [www.getapassportnow.com](http://www.getapassportnow.com) sponsored by the TIA and the Travel Business Roundtable. To view AOT's letters, visit [www.azot.gov](http://www.azot.gov) – Administration – Bi-National & Federal Projects.

Have a great week.



Margie A. Emmermann  
Director  
Arizona Office of Tourism

## AOT News Flash

### **SAVE the DATE: ATU Workshop – How to Work with Tour Operators and Travel Agents**

AOT is proud to present Arizona Tourism University's complimentary workshop **How to Work with Tour Operators and Travel Agents**.

Have you thought about working with tour operators, but you don't know where to start? Perhaps you've considered it, but don't think it fits in your budget. Attend the next ATU Workshop and "Learn How to Work with Tour Operators and Travel Agents." In addition to covering the domestic market, we'll discuss the international markets AOT targets and which ones make sense for you. Learn no-cost and low-cost ways to reach out to the travel trade without breaking the bank. Find out what a receptive operator is and how to work with them. Hear about changes in the travel trade that will affect how you do business in the future, such as consolidation, dynamic packaging and experience-based tours.

Register now by contacting Meghan Dorn at 602-364-3708 or [mdorn@azot.gov](mailto:mdorn@azot.gov).

**How to Work with Tour Operators and Travel Agents** will be held in the following locations:

**Tuesday, April 1, 2008**

1 p.m. – 3 p.m.

Best Western Arroyo Roble Hotel & Creekside Villas  
400 N Highway 89A  
Sedona, AZ, 86336

**Thursday, April 3, 2008**

1 p.m. – 3 p.m.

Holiday Inn Express Sierra Vista  
1902 S. HWY 92  
Sierra Vista, AZ 85635

**AOT to Implement an On-line Training Program for Travel Agents**

The Arizona Office of Tourism is pleased to inform you that we are in the process of developing an Arizona online certification program for travel agents. We will be working with Recommend, a travel trade publication to develop, promote and conduct this campaign. Recommend reaches more than 48,000 agents in the US and Canada and they currently have more than 13,000 active members. DMOs who are interested in being a part of this program should contact Kristy Swanson at [kswanson@azot.gov](mailto:kswanson@azot.gov) or 602-364-3696 for additional information.

**AOT Announce Ad Opportunities for International Guide**

The Arizona *Reiseplaner* is AOT's German language guide and is published every two years, serving as a foundation for all Arizona products in Germany, Switzerland and Austria. The planner provides important information to thousands of visitors to help plan what to do and where to go during their trip. The *Reiseplaner* is a full color, high quality promotional guide that highlights the broad diversity of attractions and activities that can be experienced in Arizona. The 2009-2010 edition will have a print run of 75,000 copies and will be distributed to consumers and travel professionals throughout this important European market. For additional information and to obtain a media kit, contact Kathleen Lockhart of Hennen Publishing and Marketing Group at [kathleen@hennenpmg.com](mailto:kathleen@hennenpmg.com) or at 480-664-0541.

**Industry News****Historic Open Skies Agreement has Clear Benefits for Passengers**

The much-publicized Open Skies Agreement between the U.S. and the European Union starts this week, lifting bilateral restrictions on flights between the two areas. The agreement allows U.S. airlines to expand nonstop service from their hubs to coveted destinations, particularly those favored by higher-paying business travelers. "With Open Skies, we are removing the barriers and restrictions to transatlantic travel, and the consumer will be the real winner, with a greater choice of gateways to European destinations," said Jean-Philippe Perol, US Chairman of the European Travel Commission.

Other implications?

- Some immediate reduced fares. Bmi, for example, announced a new fare sale in conjunction with Open Skies. The airline is offering a UK transatlantic fare sale starting at \$404 roundtrip beginning today through April 10, 2008 for travel from May 7 through the end of 2008. "The great thing about these two fare sales is they are valid for travel through all of 2008," says pr spokeswoman Nancy Vaughan in a press release.

- Until now, only British Airways, Virgin Atlantic, American Airlines and United Airlines could operate transatlantic flights from Heathrow. Starting this month, Air France will start daily nonstop service from Los Angeles to Heathrow. British Airways, for its part, is launching a new airline called OpenSkies in June that will fly nonstop JFK to Paris or Brussels, using a B-757 in a three-class configuration of 82 seats, with only 30 in economy class and the rest in business with lie-flat beds and premium economy.
- American Airlines is doubling frequency on their route into London Stansted Airport and Eos Airlines is adding a new route from Newark Liberty International Airport into Stansted. US Airways, Northwest Airlines, Continental and United are all launching new service to Heathrow, and Zoom Airlines is launching new seasonal routes to London Gatwick from Fort Lauderdale and San Diego.
- European carriers, for now, seem to prefer to add more code share partnerships, according to *International Travel Daily News*. Lufthansa will code share with United Airlines on 28 weekly flights from Paris Charles de Gaulle, and Air France will sell two flights from Brussels and 13 direct flights between the UK and Ireland and the US operated by Delta.
- Aer Lingus and JetBlue Airways have a deal that is quick and easy for both carriers. The deal links both their websites and allows passengers to make a single Internet booking on aerlingus.com to and from Ireland and more than 40 continental US destinations.
- Although logic dictates lower prices as a result of increased competition, high fuel prices and added airport surcharges, at Heathrow, for example, are tempering any immediate fare decreases, according to media reports.
- But passenger growth will continue. The FAA expects to see transatlantic passenger growth of about seven percent for the next four years on US and foreign carriers, with US carriers increasing international capacity more than eight percent in 2008.

*(Report by David Wilkening, TravelMole e-Newsletter)*

### **U.S. Hotels Can Bank on Foreign Travelers**

A weak dollar and a slowdown in hotel construction because of the credit crunch will likely keep the U.S. hotel industry strong this year despite the weak economy, according to a report released Wednesday by Ernst & Young's Global Real Estate Center. "The continued weakness of the dollar is producing multiple beneficial effects on the U.S. hotel market which is likely to continue for the foreseeable future and which may pull the sector through current recessionary pressures," said Michael Fishbin, U.S. director for Ernst & Young's Hospitality & Leisure practice.

International tourists are looking to the U.S. as a prime vacation spot and are spending more money, often upgrading to higher-end and even luxury accommodations because their local currency now buys, in some cases, more than twice what it did just a few years ago, the report said. Also, U.S. consumers are staying closer to home, and if they take vacations, they are more likely to travel domestically. A supply-demand imbalance is likely to benefit existing hotels and could result in higher room rates in cities such as New York, Miami and San Francisco.

[www.TravelWeekly.com](http://www.TravelWeekly.com), 3/26)

### **Food for Thought: Reviewers Now Focusing on Restaurants**

The focus on travel reviews has traditionally been hotels, but restaurant reviews are increasing in record numbers. IgoUgo saw the number of restaurant reviews jump to nearly one-third of all reviews submitted to the site in January of this year, up from less than 20 percent in January of 2006. A recent poll from Travelocity also showed that 75 percent of people consider food an important part of their travel plans. "An increasing number of travelers are looking to travel review sites for great tips from real travelers on where to find food that's worth the trip," says

Hotelmarketing.com. In keeping with the trend, IgoUgo has launched the IgoUgo Community Table, a page highlighting the community's food content and "celebrating the search for the perfect vacation meal." The Community Table features Q&As with foodie members and celebrity chefs, links to thousands of member food and restaurant reviews, and roundups of local restaurant secrets. "Food has always been an important part of people's travel experiences, but we're now seeing them sharing more and more of their opinions with fellow travelers through reviews," said Cameron Siewert, content and community manager of IgoUgo. He added: "Online travel communities like IgoUgo are becoming the new place to find out where to eat both across the ocean and across the street."

*(Report by David Wilkening, TravelMole e-Newsletter)*